United Nations E/CN.9/2008/3

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 January 2008

Original: English

Commission on Population and Development
Forty-first session
7-11 April 2008
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up actions to the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development

World population monitoring, focusing on population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In its decision 2006/101, the Commission on Population and Development decided that the special theme for its forty-first session would be population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development. The present report provides the basis for the Commission's deliberations.

The report reviews trends in and prospects for urban and rural population growth and changes in the population of cities. It discusses the relative contribution of natural increase and the combination of rural-urban migration and reclassification to the growth of the urban population. It considers the relative importance of different types of internal migration and describes the implications of population distribution for urban and rural dependency ratios. It documents the impact of urbanization on poverty reduction and reviews current knowledge on differentials in access to services and demographic behaviour in relation to urban or rural residence, giving particular attention to outcomes for the urban poor. The report also documents major policy developments in regard to population distribution. This comprehensive review underscores the importance of urbanization for economic growth and human well-being, concluding that urbanization's positive aspects should be leveraged while working to prevent or minimize its ills.

* E/CN.9/2008/1.

08-20514 (E) 040208

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–8	3
II.	Levels and trends in population distribution	9–25	5
	A. Urbanization and growth	9–14	5
	B. Rural population trends	15–18	11
	C. City size and growth	19–25	11
III.	Internal migration	26–40	15
	A. Migration and the components of urban growth	26–30	15
	B. Internal migration, development and migrant characteristics	31–40	16
IV.	Population distribution and population ageing	41–44	18
V.	Poverty in an urbanizing world	45–49	20
VI.	Urbanization and access to basic services	50–55	22
VII.	Urbanization and demographic behaviour	56–64	24
VIII.	Population distribution policies	65–74	26
IX.	Conclusions and recommendations	75–86	28

Tables

1.	Evolution of urban and rural populations, 1950-2050	6
2.	Countries accounting for 75 per cent of the world urban population in 2007	9
3.	Population of the world's megacities, 1975-2025	12
4.	Urban population by city size class, 1975, 2005 and 2025	14
5.	Estimates of the number of people living on at most $1 a day or at most $2 a day	21

Figures

I.	Percentage of population in urban areas, 2007, 2025 and 2050	7
II.	Urban and rural population growth for the world and the more developed and the less developed regions, 1950-2050	10
III.	Annual growth of the urban and rural populations of the more developed and the less developed regions, 1950-2050	10
IV.	Distribution of the world urban population by city size class, 1975, 2005 and 2025	13
V.	Share of world urban population growth accounted for by cities of different class sizes, 1975-2005 and 2005-2025	14
VI.	Dependency ratios for urban and rural areas by major area, 2005	19
VII.	Government views on the spatial distribution of their populations, 2007	26

I. Introduction

1. The distribution of humanity on the Earth's surface has always responded to the opportunities that different territories provide. After the invention of agriculture, the availability of arable land largely determined the places where most people settled. The practice of agriculture also permitted the accumulation of food surpluses and the differentiation of productive activities that led to the emergence of more complex settlements generically identified as "cities". In modern history, cities have played key roles as centres of government, production, trade, knowledge, innovation and rising productivity. The changes brought about by the industrial revolution would be unimaginable in the absence of cities. The mechanization of production made necessary the concentration of population. Rapid industrialization was accompanied by increasing urbanization. In 1920, the more developed regions, being the most industrialized, had just under 30 per cent of their population in urban areas. As industrialization advanced in the developing world so did urbanization, particularly in Latin America, where 41 per cent of the population was urban by 1950. In Africa and Asia levels of urbanization remained lower, although the urban population increased markedly, particularly in Asia. Between 1920 and 2007, the world's urban population increased from about 270 million to 3.3 billion, with 1.5 billion urban dwellers added to Asia, 750 million to the more developed regions, just under 450 million to Latin America and the Caribbean and just over 350 million to Africa. These changes foreshadow those to come. Between 2007 and 2050, the urban population is expected to increase almost as much as it did from 1920 to 2007: 3.1 billion additional urban dwellers are expected by 2050, including 1.8 billion in Asia and 0.9 billion in Africa. These powerful trends will shape and in turn be shaped by economic and social development.

2. Urbanization has been driven by the concentration of investment and employment opportunities in urban areas as well as by the transition from low-productivity agriculture to more productive mechanized agriculture, which has produced labour surpluses in rural areas. Productive activities in industry and services cluster in cities. By one estimate, 80 per cent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) is generated by urban areas. As cities attract businesses and jobs, they become magnets for migrants seeking better opportunities and they bring together both the human and the entrepreneurial resources to generate new ideas, innovations and increasingly productive uses of technology. In countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), for instance, 81 per cent of patents are filed by applicants residing in urban regions.[1] Cities also facilitate social change, particularly through the educational and cultural opportunities they provide. Thus, in virtually every country, the transition to lower fertility rates started and has advanced farther in urban areas.

3. At the macro level, there is a positive correlation between per capita income and level of urbanization. Rising urbanization is also positively related to increases in the proportion of GDP generated by industry and services as well as with the proportion of the labour force working in those sectors.[2] Countries that have

[1] *OECD Territorial Reviews: Competitive Cities in the Global Economy* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2006).

[2] David Satterthwaite, "The transition to a predominantly urban world and its underpinnings", International Institute for Environment and Development, Human Settlements Discussion Paper Series, 4 September 2007.

undergone long periods of poor economic performance tend to be the least urbanized. Countries with higher levels of urbanization tend to have higher per capita incomes, more stable economies and stronger political institutions. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that urbanization per se is not the driver of income growth. At low levels of development, the association between level of urbanization and income per capita is weak.[3] Countries in Africa, for instance, tended to experience sluggish economic growth from 1960 to 2004 even as their levels of urbanization rose. In Asia, where many countries had levels and rates of urbanization similar to those in Africa, economic growth has been rapid. Africa and Asia are the least urbanized major areas of the world. These observations suggest that urbanization may be a necessary but not a sufficient condition to sustain economic growth.

4. All the evidence indicates that people benefit from living in urban areas. Average urban incomes are generally higher than those in rural areas. Urban dwellers also have better access to a variety of services, including education, health, transportation, communications, water supply, sanitation and waste management. Because of economies of scale, it is more efficient and cheaper to provide such services to large and geographically concentrated populations than to populations scattered over large rural areas. Furthermore, access to services tends to be better in larger urban agglomerations than in small cities or towns.

5. Despite its many positive facets, urbanization is not without its ills. Large cities, in particular, are prone to suffer from environmental contamination stemming from traffic congestion, the concentration of industry and inadequate waste disposal systems. Cities also tend to make demands on land, water and natural resources that are disproportionately great in relation to their land area or their population, whose high average income results in high rates of consumption. Although the concentration of population and economic activity in cities is at the root of these problems, persistent disparities among city dwellers mean that poor people bear the brunt of the negative aspects of urbanization. Because income inequality in the cities of developing countries is stark, the numbers involved are large and growing. At the world level, the rate of growth of the urban poor (those living on no more than $1 a day) has surpassed that of the urban population at large. Because of high housing costs, poor people in cities often have little choice but to live in crowded slums, where water and sanitation facilities are inadequate. According to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) most recent estimate, 840 million people lived in slums in 2005. In 2004, over 600 million urban dwellers lacked access to improved sanitation and 180 million lacked access to an improved water source.

6. The immediate consequence of poor living conditions is poor health. Thus, malnutrition and child mortality rates are higher among slum-dwellers than among other city-dwellers. In addition, slum-dwellers also exhibit lower levels of educational attainment and higher fertility than other urban dwellers, and they are more vulnerable to environmental disasters and pollution. Nevertheless, in most developing countries rural populations have worse living conditions and fare worse in terms of health and mortality than slum-dwellers. Furthermore, poverty is still largely concentrated in rural areas, where 75 per cent of the world's poor live. Hence, although urbanization is not by itself a cure to humanity's ills, it is a process that is crucial in addressing them.

[3] David E. Bloom and Tarun Khanna, "The urban revolution", *Finance and Development*, September 2007.

7. The continued urbanization of the world population may be necessary to ensure sustainable development. Between 2007 and 2050, the urban areas of the developing world are expected to absorb an additional 3.1 billion people while the overall population will grow by just 2.5 billion people. In 2008, the 3.4 billion urban dwellers in the world live on barely 3 per cent of the Earth's land area, while the livelihoods of today's 3.4 billion rural dwellers depend mainly on cropland, which accounts for 12 per cent of the world's land area. Burdening agricultural areas with the additional 2.5 billion people expected to live on Earth by 2050 hardly seems sustainable. Cities, where wealth, infrastructure and know-how are already concentrated, are in a better position to adapt to growing populations. By concentrating producers and consumers, businesses and workers, polluters and resource users, urban settlements make it easier to manage and regulate all actors effectively and equitably so as to address or, better still, prevent the problems arising from urbanization.

8. Faced with the numerous opportunities and challenges associated with urbanization, many Governments have consistently considered their population's spatial distribution a concern. As of 2007, 85 per cent of Governments expressed concern about their pattern of population distribution, a percentage that has changed little since the 1970s. Acting on that concern, many Governments have adopted measures to reduce or reverse rural to urban migration. Most of those measures have had little success, largely because individuals have powerful incentives to move to areas where the chances of improving their standard of living are high. Migrants in cities generally do better than people staying in rural areas, and their remittances are an important source of income for the relatives they leave behind. Evidence suggests that urbanization has done more to reduce rural poverty than to reduce urban poverty.[4] Although urban areas account for an increasing share of the poor, the large majority of the poor still live in the rural areas of developing countries. Therefore, strategies to improve the living standards of all must combine policies to promote rural development with those to improve the lot of poor urban dwellers by improving service provision, raising their educational levels, improving transportation, improving access to health services and family planning, strengthening the regulation of land use and facilitating the acquisition of land titles. By gravitating to towns and cities, rural migrants, including the poor, gain access to opportunities unavailable in their communities of origin and are more likely to contribute to economic growth. A faster pace of urbanization, especially if generated by the economic dynamism of urban settlements and supported by the right policies, is therefore likely to reinforce the overall reduction of poverty and should not be hindered.

II. Levels and trends in population distribution

A. Urbanization and growth

9. In 2008, half of the world population is expected to live, for the first time in history, in urban areas. Yet major disparities remain in the level of urbanization attained by different countries and regions (see table 1 and figure I). The transformative power of urbanization took effect earlier in today's more developed

[4] Martin Ravallion, "Urban poverty", *Finance and Development*, September 2007.

regions, and they have reached high levels of urbanization, surpassing 80 per cent in Australia, New Zealand and North America. Europe is the least urbanized major area in the developed world, with 72 per cent of its population living in urban areas. Among the less developed regions, Latin America and the Caribbean has an exceptionally high level of urbanization (78 per cent), higher than that of Europe. Africa and Asia, in contrast, remain mostly rural, with 38 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively, of their populations living in urban areas. Yet half of the urban population in the world lived in Asia in 2007. Europe had the second highest share at 16 per cent.

10. Over the coming decades, the level of urbanization is expected to increase in all major areas, with Africa and Asia urbanizing more rapidly than other major areas even if their expected rates of urbanization are lower than they have been in the past (see table 1). Nevertheless, by mid-century, Africa, Asia and developing Oceania are expected to have lower levels of urbanization than the more developed regions or Latin America and the Caribbean. Overall, the world population is expected to be nearly 70 per cent urban in 2050. At that time, most of the urban population will be concentrated in Asia (54 per cent) and Africa (19 per cent).

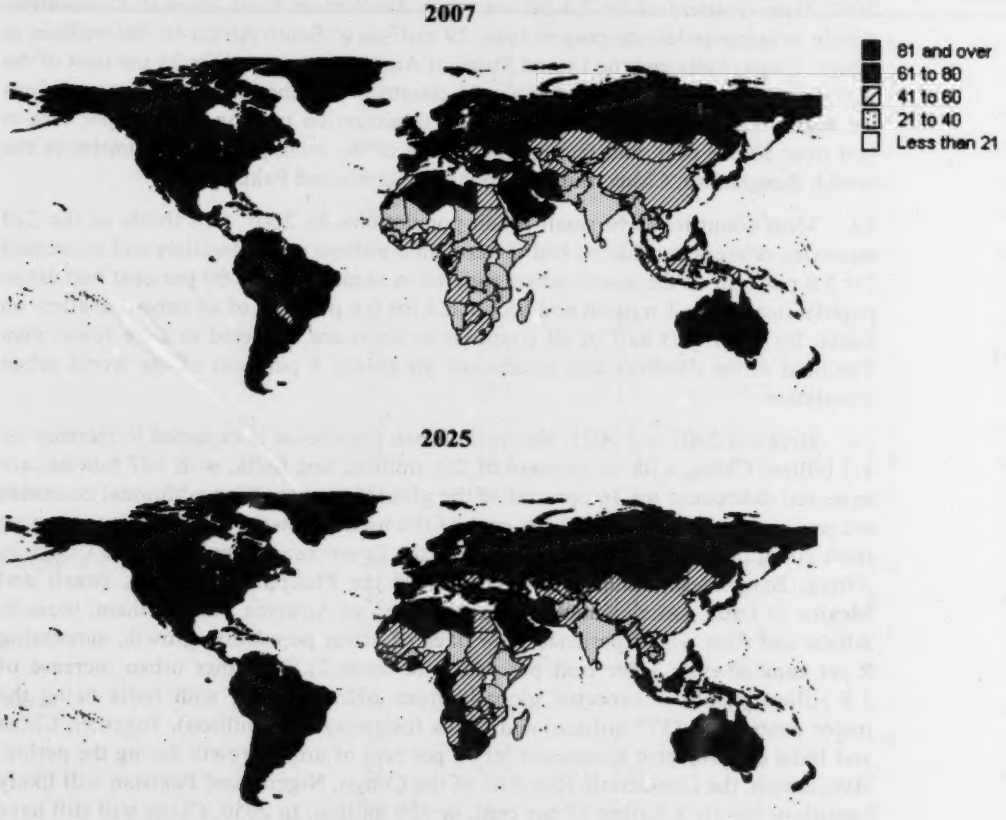
Table 1
Evolution of urban and rural populations, 1950-2050

	1950	*1975*	*2007*	*2025*	*2050*	*1950-1975*	*1975-2007*	*2007-2025*	*2025-2050*
	Population in urban areas (millions)					*Rate of urban population change (percentage)*			
World	737	1 519	3 294	4 584	6 398	2.9	2.4	1.8	1.3
More developed regions	427	702	910	995	1071	2.0	0.8	0.5	0.3
Less developed regions	310	817	2 384	3 590	5 327	3.9	3.3	2.3	1.6
Least developed countries	15	53	225	452	967	5.0	4.5	3.9	3.0
Africa	33	107	373	658	1 234	4.8	3.9	3.1	2.5
Asia	237	574	1 645	2 440	3 486	3.5	3.3	2.2	1.4
Latin America and the Caribbean	69	198	448	575	683	4.2	2.5	1.4	0.7
North America	110	180	275	337	401	2.0	1.3	1.1	0.7
Europe	281	444	528	545	557	1.8	0.5	0.2	0.1
Oceania	8	15	24	30	37	2.6	1.4	1.2	0.9
	Population in rural areas (millions)					*Rate of rural population change (percentage)*			
World	1 798	2 558	3 377	3 426	2 793	1.4	0.9	0.1	-0.8
More developed regions	386	346	313	264	174	-0.4	-0.3	-0.9	-1.7
Less developed regions	1 412	2 211	3 064	3 162	2 619	1.8	1.0	0.2	-0.8
Least developed countries	185	305	580	734	775	2.0	2.0	1.3	0.2
Africa	192	309	592	736	764	1.9	2.0	1.2	0.1
Asia	1 174	1 820	2 384	2 339	1 780	1.8	0.8	-0.1	-1.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	98	126	124	113	87	1.0	-0.1	-0.5	-1.1
North America	62	64	63	56	44	0.1	0.0	-0.7	-1.0
Europe	267	232	204	170	107	-0.6	-0.4	-1.0	-1.8
Oceania	5	6	10	12	11	0.9	1.6	0.8	0.0

	1950	1975	2007	2025	2050	1950-1975	1975-2007	2007-2025	2025-2050
	Percentage in urban areas					*Rate of urbanization (percentage)*			
World	29.1	37.3	49.4	57.2	69.6	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.8
More developed regions	52.5	67.0	74.4	79.0	86.0	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.3
Less developed regions	18.0	27.0	43.8	53.2	67.0	1.6	1.5	1.1	0.9
Least developed countries	7.5	14.8	27.9	38.1	55.5	2.7	2.0	1.7	1.5
Africa	14.5	25.7	38.7	47.2	61.8	2.3	1.3	1.1	1.1
Asia	16.8	24.0	40.8	51.1	66.2	1.4	1.7	1.2	1.0
Latin America and the Caribbean	41.4	61.1	78.3	83.5	88.7	1.6	0.8	0.4	0.2
North America	63.9	73.8	81.3	85.7	90.2	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.2
Europe	51.2	65.7	72.2	76.2	83.8	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.4
Oceania	62.0	71.5	70.5	71.9	76.4	0.6	0.0	0.1	0.2

Source: *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision*, United Nations (forthcoming).

Figure I
Percentage of population in urban areas, 2007, 2025 and 2050



2050

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division: World Population Prospects DEMOBASE, extracted in 2007.

Note: The boundaries shown on the present map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

11. The urban population is highly concentrated in a few countries (see table 2). In 2007, three quarters of the 3.3 billion urban dwellers on Earth lived in 25 countries whose urban populations ranged from 29 million in South Africa to 561 million in China. China, India and the United States of America accounted for 35 per cent of the world's urban population. Most of the 25 countries with the largest urban populations are highly urbanized, but 7 have levels of urbanization ranging from 26 per cent to just over 50 per cent, and they include some of the most populous countries in the world: Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan.

12. Most countries have small urban populations. In 2007, two thirds of the 229 countries or areas considered had fewer than 5 million urban dwellers and accounted for 5.8 per cent of the world urban population. Among them, 60 per cent had urban populations below 1 million and accounted for 0.6 per cent of all urban dwellers on Earth. By 2050, just half of all countries or areas are expected to have fewer than 5 million urban dwellers and to account for barely 2 per cent of the world urban population.

13. Between 2007 and 2025, the world urban population is expected to increase by 1.3 billion. China, with an increase of 261 million, and India, with 197 million, are expected to account for 36 per cent of the global increase. Nine additional countries are projected to contribute 29 per cent of the urban growth, with increases ranging from 20 million to 62 million: Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Africa; Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines in Asia; Brazil and Mexico in Latin America; and the United States of America. Among them, those in Africa and Asia will experience high rates of urban population growth, surpassing 2 per cent or even 3 per cent per year (see table 2). A further urban increase of 1.8 billion people is expected globally from 2025 to 2050, with India being the major contributor (377 million) and China following (205 million). Together, China and India are projected to account for 32 per cent of urban growth during the period. Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and Pakistan will likely contribute jointly a further 17 per cent, or 309 million. In 2050, China will still have the largest urban population (1 billion), followed by India (0.9 million).

14. Over the coming decades, world population growth will largely be determined by growth in the urban areas of developing countries (see figure II). Around 2019, when the world rural population reaches 3.5 billion, it is expected to start declining because the number of rural inhabitants in the less developed regions will begin a slow descent. The rural population of the more developed regions has been declining since the 1960s, and their urban population will increase by just 85 million between 2007 and 2050. In a few developed countries, the urban population will decrease (e.g., the Russian Federation and Ukraine). Consequently, the annual increase of the urban population in the less developed regions will dominate population growth for the foreseeable future (see figure III). That annual increase, which today amounts to 62 million people, is expected to peak at 72 million around 2030 and decline to 63 million by mid-century. In comparison, the urban population of the more developed regions will gain no more than 2 million or 3 million people annually.

Table 2
Countries accounting for 75 per cent of the world urban population in 2007

	Country	*Rural population (millions)*	*Urban population (millions)*	*Proportion urban*	*Percentage of world urban population*	*Cumulative percentage*	*Growth rate, 2007-2025 (percentage)*	*Urban population in 2025 (millions)*
	World	3 377	3 294	49.4	100.0	100.0	1.8	4 584
1	China	767	561	42.2	17.0	17.0	2.1	822
2	India	828	341	29.2	10.4	27.4	2.5	538
3	United States of America	57	249	81.4	7.6	35.0	1.1	305
4	Brazil	28	163	85.2	5.0	39.9	1.3	207
5	Indonesia	115	117	50.4	3.5	43.5	2.4	179
6	Russian Federation	39	104	72.8	3.2	46.6	-0.4	96
7	Japan	43	85	66.3	2.6	49.2	0.1	86
8	Mexico	25	82	76.9	2.5	51.7	1.2	102
9	Nigeria	78	71	47.6	2.1	53.8	3.3	127
10	Germany	22	61	73.5	1.8	55.7	0.1	62
11	Pakistan	105	58	35.7	1.8	57.4	3.2	104
12	Philippines	31	57	64.2	1.7	59.2	2.4	86
13	United Kingdom	6	55	89.9	1.7	60.8	0.5	60
14	Turkey	24	51	68.2	1.6	62.4	1.6	68
15	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	23	48	68.0	1.5	63.8	1.8	67
16	France	14	48	77.1	1.4	65.3	0.7	54
17	Bangladesh	116	42	26.6	1.3	66.6	3.3	77
18	Italy	19	40	67.9	1.2	67.8	0.3	42
19	Republic of Korea	9	39	81.3	1.2	69.0	0.4	42
20	Argentina	3	36	91.8	1.1	70.1	1.0	43
21	Colombia	12	34	74.2	1.0	71.1	1.4	44
22	Spain	10	34	77.0	1.0	72.1	0.5	38
23	Egypt	43	32	42.6	1.0	73.1	2.0	46

Country	Rural population (millions)	Urban population (millions)	Proportion urban	Percentage of world urban population	Cumulative percentage	Growth rate, 2007-2025 (percentage)	Urban population in 2025 (millions)
24 Ukraine	15	31	67.9	1.0	74.1	-0.5	28
25 South Africa	19	29	60.2	0.9	75.0	1.2	36

Source: *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision*, United Nations (forthcoming).

Figure II
Urban and rural population growth for the world and the more developed and the less developed regions, 1950-2050

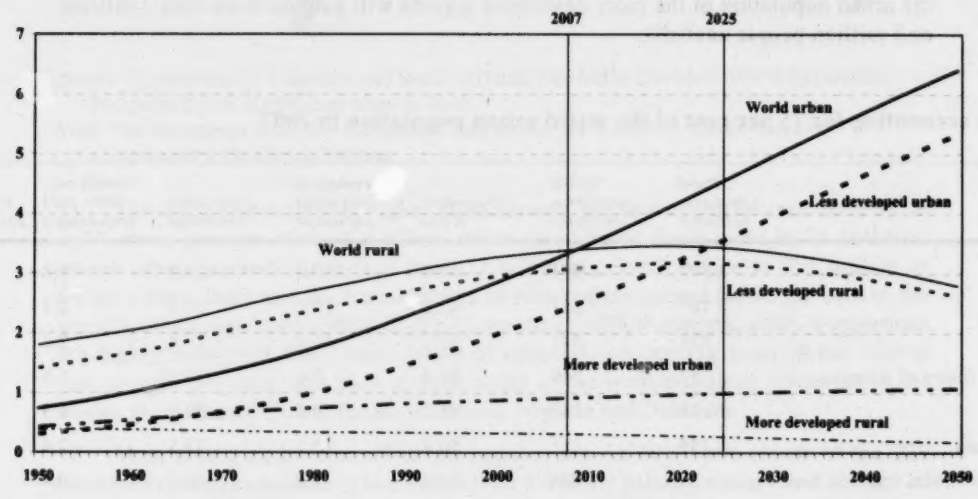
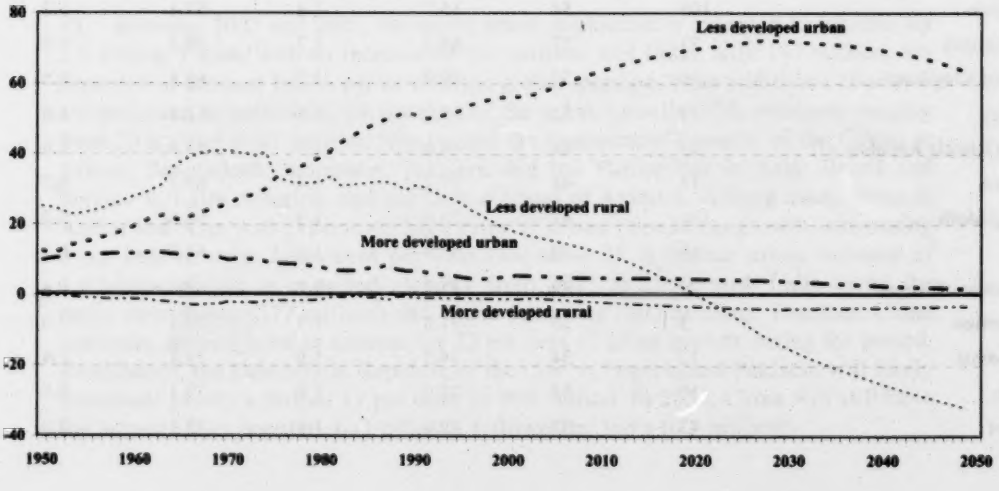


Figure III
Annual growth of the urban and rural populations of the more developed and the less developed regions, 1950-2050



B. Rural population trends

15. In 2007, 3.4 billion persons lived in rural areas (see table 1). In contrast with the urban population, the rural population is growing slowly globally and declining in all major areas except Africa and Oceania. Asia, with 2.4 billion rural inhabitants, accounts for 70.6 per cent of the world rural population. Africa, with 0.6 billion, accounts for 17.5 per cent. The rural share of all other regions is 12 per cent. By 2050, Africa's rural population is expected to increase by 29 per cent, reaching nearly 0.8 billion, or 27 per cent of the world rural population. Asia's rural population will decline markedly, to 1.8 billion in 2050, so its share will drop to 64 per cent. Consequently, over the coming decades, just 1 in every 10 rural inhabitants will live outside Africa or Asia.

16. The rural population is even more highly concentrated in a few countries than the urban population. In 2007, 18 countries accounted for 75 per cent of the rural population and all but three (Japan, the Russian Federation and the United States of America) are in Africa or Asia. India has the largest rural population (828 million), followed by China (767 million). Together, they account for 47 per cent of the world rural population. Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan follow, each with over 100 million rural inhabitants. In Africa, the largest rural populations are located in Nigeria (78 million), Ethiopia (69 million), Egypt (43 million), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (42 million), the United Republic of Tanzania (30 million) and Kenya (30 million). From 2007 to 2025, the rural populations of most of these African countries are projected to increase at rates of 1 per cent or more per year, the only exception being Nigeria. Among populous countries in Asia, Pakistan will have the highest rural growth rate from 2007 to 2025 (0.8 per cent per year). In contrast, in 8 of the 18 countries with large rural populations the rural population is declining, with China, Indonesia, Japan, the Russian Federation and the United States having the fastest rates of decline.

17. By 2025, India's rural population will be near its peak, at 909 million, and by 2050 it is expected to decrease to 743 million. China's rural population will be decreasing steadily in future decades, to reach 382 million in 2050, about half its current level. Most of the other countries with large rural populations are expected to see them peak after 2020. The rural populations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Nigeria are projected to gain between 27 million and 37 million each by 2050, thus having the greatest increases among populous countries. In contrast, Indonesia's rural population is projected to decrease by 53 million.

18. As in the case of the urban population, most countries have small rural populations. In 2007, 69 per cent of the 229 countries or areas considered had at most 5 million rural inhabitants and accounted for 4.8 per cent of the world rural population. In three quarters of them, the rural population is projected to decrease during the period from 2007 to 2050.

C. City size and growth

19. Today's 3.4 billion urban dwellers are distributed unevenly among urban settlements of different size. In discussing urbanization, the focus is often on large cities, cities with more inhabitants than many countries in the world. Naturally, those cities or urban agglomerations tend to be concentrated in populous countries.

In 2007, 19 urban agglomerations qualified as megacities, that is, they have at least 10 million inhabitants (see table 3). The most populous, Tokyo, has nearly 36 million inhabitants, but it encompasses all contiguous densely inhabited districts in Tokyo-to (ku-bu) plus those in 87 surrounding cities and towns, including Yokohama, Kawasaki and Chiba, important cities in their own right. The term urban agglomeration is used to indicate that the settlements considered are often a combination of several distinct units located close to one another and having a variety of functional linkages.

20. In addition to Tokyo, Asia has 10 other megacities, while Latin America has four, North America two and Africa and Europe one each. Eleven of these megacities are capitals of their countries. By 2025, there will be an additional 8 megacities, for a total of 27: in Asia the number will have increased by five, in Africa by two and in Europe by one. Despite their visibility and dynamism, megacities account for a small though increasing proportion of the world urban population: 8 per cent in 2005 and 10 per cent in 2025 (see figure IV).

21. The next tier of large cities, those with populations ranging from 5 million to just under 10 million, numbered 31 in 2005 and is expected to number 48 in 2025, but accounting for just 7 per cent of the urban population on both dates. Three quarters of these "megacities in waiting" are located in developing countries.

Table 3
Population of the world's megacities, 1975-2025
(Millions of inhabitants)

	City	*1975*	*City*	*2007*	*City*	*2015*	*City*	*2025*
1	Tokyo	26.6	Tokyo	35.7	Tokyo	36.4	Tokyo	36.4
2	New York-Newark	15.9	New York-Newark	19.0	Mumbai (Bombay)	21.9	Mumbai (Bombay)	26.4
3	Mexico City	10.7	Mexico City	19.0	São Paulo	20.5	Delhi	22.5
4			Mumbai (Bombay)	19.0	Mexico City	20.2	Dhaka	22.0
5			São Paulo	18.8	New York-Newark	20.0	São Paulo	21.4
6			Delhi	15.9	Delhi	18.7	Mexico City	21.0
7			Shanghai	15.0	Shanghai	17.2	New York-Newark	20.6
8			Kolkata (Calcutta)	14.8	Kolkata (Calcutta)	17.0	Kolkata (Calcutta)	20.6
9			Dhaka	13.5	Dhaka	17.0	Shanghai	19.4
10			Buenos Aires	12.8	Karachi	14.9	Karachi	19.1
11			Los Angeles[a]	12.5	Cairo	13.5	Kinshasa	16.8
12			Karachi	12.1	Buenos Aires	13.4	Lagos	15.8
13			Cairo	11.9	Los Angeles[a]	13.2	Cairo	15.6
14			Rio de Janeiro	11.7	Beijing	12.8	Manila	14.8
15			Osaka-Kobe	11.3	Manila	12.8	Beijing	14.5
16			Beijing	11.1	Rio de Janeiro	12.8	Buenos Aires	13.8
17			Manila	11.1	Lagos	12.4	Los Angeles[a]	13.7
18			Moscow	10.5	Osaka-Kobe	11.4	Rio de Janeiro	13.4
19			Istanbul	10.1	Kinshasa	11.3	Jakarta	12.4

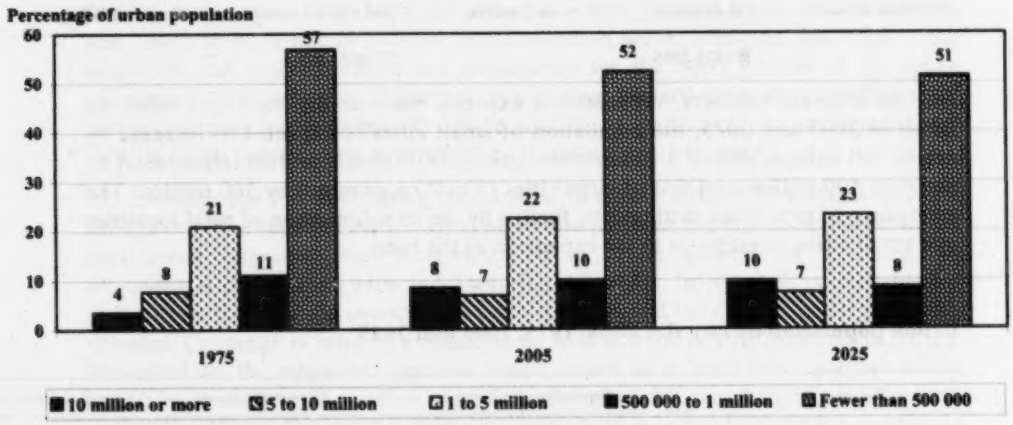
	City	1975	City	2007	City	2015	City	2025
20					Istanbul	11.2	Istanbul	12.1
21					Jakarta	10.8	Guangzhou[b]	11.8
22					Moscow	10.5	Osaka-Kobe	11.4
23					Guangzhou[b]	10.4	Moscow	10.5
24					Paris	10.0	Lahore	10.5
25							Shenzhen	10.2
26							Chennai (Madras)	10.1
27							Paris	10.0

Source: *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision*, United Nations (forthcoming).

[a] Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana.

[b] Guangzhou in Guangdong province.

Figure IV
Distribution of the world urban population by city size class, 1975, 2005 and 2025

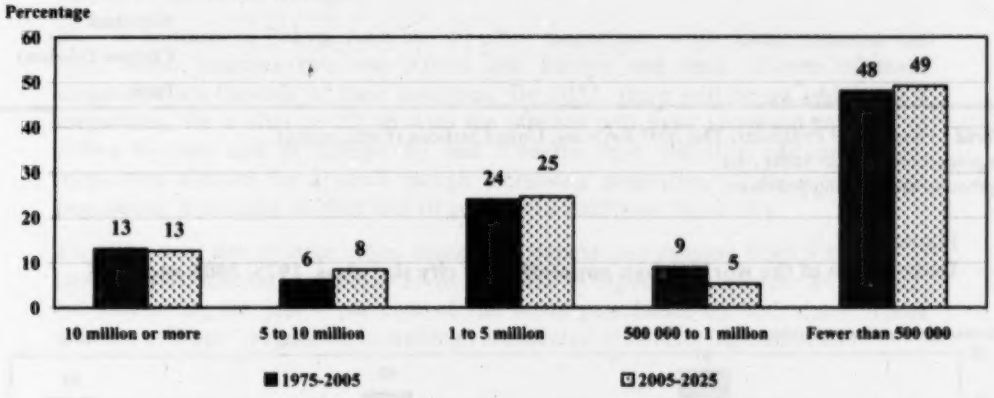


22. The cities with fewer than 5 million inhabitants but more than a million are considerably more numerous (361 in 2005, increasing to 526 in 2025) and they accounted for 22 per cent of the urban population in 2005. Smaller cities, having fewer than a million inhabitants but more than half a million, are also numerous (448 in 2005, rising to 551 in 2025), but because of their small populations their share of the overall urban population is a low 10 per cent. As time goes on and cities pass from one category to the next, the combined share of these two categories is expected to decline somewhat, from 32 per cent in 2005 to 31 per cent in 2025.

23. All the size categories considered so far account for 48 per cent of the urban population, implying that smaller cities comprise over half of the urban population. There is no complete listing of all the small cities, since many have only a few thousand inhabitants, but the increases observed in the urban population are driven in large part by the increasing population in small urban centres. Between 1975 and 2005, 48 per cent of the increase in the world urban population was accounted for by the rise in the population of small cities (see figure V), and that share is expected

to remain nearly unchanged from 2005 to 2025. In comparison, large cities, including megacities, account for about a fifth of urban growth, while medium-sized cities account for about a third.

Figure V
Share of world urban population growth accounted for by cities of different class sizes, 1975-2005 and 2005-2025



24. In absolute numbers, urbanization expands more at the base (see table 4). Between 2005 and 2025, the population of small cities is expected to increase by nearly 700 million, that of medium-sized cities (500,000 to 5 million inhabitants) by just over 400 million and that of large cities (5 million or more) by 300 million. The emergence of new urban settlements, fuelled by the transformation of rural localities into small cities, contributes to the expansion of the base.

Table 4
Urban population by city size class, 1975, 2005 and 2025

	Population (millions)			*Growth (millions)*		*Growth rate (percentage)*	
	1975	*2005*	*2025*	*1975-2005*	*2005-2025*	*1975-2005*	*2005-2025*
World urban population	1 519	3 165	4,584	1 646	1 420	2.45	1.85
City size class							
10 million or more	53	268	447	215	179	5.39	2.55
5 to 10 million	117	217	337	100	119	2.06	2.19
1 to 5 million	317	711	1 060	394	349	2.69	2.00
500 000 to 1 million	168	314	390	147	75	2.10	1.07
Fewer than 500 000	863	1 653	2 351	790	698	2.17	1.76

Source: *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision*, United Nations (forthcoming).

25. Relative to its initial population size, the fastest growing size class is that of megacities, partly because this group tends to grow by "quantum leaps" of at least 10 million. However, as the number of megacities increases, their growth rate declines. Thus, the average annual growth rate of the megacity class is expected to

drop from 5.4 per cent in the period from 1975 to 2005 to 2.6 per cent from 2005 to 2025. This overall growth rate for the megacity class does not mean that each megacity grows that fast. Because of their large populations, megacities tend to grow more slowly than less populous cities. Exceptions exist, however. Among the megacities of 2007, the fastest growing were Dhaka, with an annual growth rate of 3.3 per cent from 2005 to 2010, Delhi, with 2.5 per cent, and Karachi with 2.4 per cent. All other megacities in Africa and Asia have current annual growth rates ranging from 1.6 per cent to 2.0 per cent, while those in other regions have annual growth rates below 1.4 per cent. By comparison, there are 176 other cities with at least 750,000 inhabitants growing at an annual rate of 2.5 per cent or higher.

III. Internal migration

A. Migration and the components of urban growth

26. Population distribution is determined by the growth or decline of populations on site (the difference between births and deaths, known as natural increase) and by internal migration and reclassification of rural localities into urban centres. Because fertility levels are usually lower in urban areas than in rural areas, natural increase also tends to be lower in relative terms in urban areas, implying that rural-urban migration and reclassification are responsible for the rapid growth of the urban population relative to that of the rural population. Nevertheless, the contribution of natural increase to urban growth can be significant, particularly in countries where fertility levels remain high and overall population growth is rapid.

27. Among the 113 developing countries with over a million inhabitants in 2007, estimates of the separate contribution of natural increase and the combination of net rural-urban migration and reclassification to urban growth are available for 62 countries during the 1980s and 34 during the 1990s. Information is available for at least two thirds of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean for those two decades. Coverage is lower for countries in Asia and lower still for those in Africa. Nevertheless, the estimates available indicate that, in at least three quarters of the countries in each region, natural increase accounted for over half of urban growth during the 1980s. During the 1990s the same held true for 6 of the 8 countries in Africa, 7 of the 11 countries in Asia and 12 of the 15 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with estimates available.

28. Among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, for most of which estimates are available since the 1960s, a tendency for natural increase to account for increasing proportions of urban growth is discernible, despite declining fertility trends.[5] The high levels of urbanization attained by these countries contribute to this outcome. In Africa and Asia, most countries lack sufficient estimates to assess trends but, in the 1980s, natural increase accounted for over 70 per cent of urban growth in a quarter of those in Africa and half of those in Asia.

29. Among the few countries where migration and reclassification account for most of urban growth, two stand out: China and Indonesia. In China, the estimates available suggest that those two components accounted for over 70 per cent of urban

[5] "Panorama social de América Latina", documento informativo, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

growth in the 1980s and about 80 per cent in the 1990s. Because the estimates are derived from census information and the definitions of "urban" used in the Chinese censuses have been changing, this finding should be interpreted with caution since it probably means that reclassification is a major contributor to urban growth. Estimates for Indonesia indicate a steady decline in the contribution of natural increase to urban growth, from nearly 70 per cent in the 1960s to 32 per cent in the 1990s.

30. In sum, according to available estimates, in the majority of countries natural increase makes a larger contribution to urban population growth than internal migration and reclassification combined. However, the exceptions include some of the most populous countries on Earth and suggest that the particularities of each case need to be considered in devising appropriate responses to that growth.

B. Internal migration, development and migrant characteristics

31. According to economic theory, individuals migrate from low-wage to high-wage areas seeking to maximize their earnings, which are conditioned by their human capital and the chances of getting a job at the destination. From this perspective, rural-urban migration would be the most likely form of migration, given the large differences in typical wages between rural and urban areas. Rural-urban migration is also a means for rural households to insure themselves against a number of risks and, in the absence of well-functioning credit markets, to get the funds needed for investment (in grain, fertilizer, education) via remittances. These factors have guided much of the analysis of internal migration in developing countries. However, empirical evidence shows that, contrary to expectations, rural-urban migration may not be the most common type of internal migration in many countries.

32. Depending on the stage of urbanization, movements between rural areas or those between urban areas may be dominant. Data on recent migrants (persons moving during the six years preceding interview) obtained from demographic and health surveys permit an assessment of the relevance of the different types of migration. In 26 out of the 46 countries with data available on female migrants, rural-rural migration is the most common, and it tends to be highest in Africa. In 15 countries, urban-urban migration is dominant among women. Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Paraguay and Bolivia exhibit the highest percentage of urban-urban migrants among female migrants. Rural-urban migration is dominant among female migrants only in the Comoros, the Dominican Republic and Haiti. In two other countries, urban-rural migration predominates among women who move.

33. Among recent male migrants, urban-urban migration predominates in 12 of the 24 countries with data available. Rural-rural migration is most common among male migrants in a further seven countries, mostly in Africa. Rural-urban migration is the predominant type in only one country (Kazakhstan), whereas urban-rural migration is the most common for males in Burundi, Kenya, Mali and Nigeria.

34. Generally, the participation of women in internal migration flows is high, although, depending on the type of flow, the level of participation varies. In Egypt and India, for instance, females outnumber males, sometimes by wide margins, in rural-rural migration. In Brazil, Honduras, the Philippines and Thailand, women have been overrepresented in migration to urban areas. Using demographic and health survey (DHS) data and comparing male and female participation in all types of movements, females tend to outnumber males in most countries, but the differences

are generally small. In Bangladesh, Benin, Nepal and Pakistan, female migrants outnumber male migrants by over 10 per cent. In countries of South Asia, the tradition of marrying women to men from a different village has contributed to this differential.

35. Analysis of DHS data from the perspective of region of origin indicates that urban-origin migrants are more likely to move to urban areas than rural-origin migrants. However, countries with high proportions of urban-origin migrants moving between urban areas also tend to have high proportions of rural-origin migrants moving to urban areas. In most countries in Africa and Asia, rural-origin male migrants are more likely to move to urban areas than rural-origin female migrants. The reverse holds true for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, where rural-origin female migrants are more likely to move to urban areas than their male counterparts.

36. Migrants are not randomly selected from the population. In particular, the level of educational attainment of migrants is often higher than that of non-migrants, even after controlling for age, childhood residence and current residence. Analysis of DHS data reveals that, in Africa and Asia, migrant women are less likely to be illiterate than non-migrant women and usually have higher levels of educational attainment than their non-migrant counterparts. In Latin America and the Caribbean, in contrast, migrant women have lower levels of educational attainment than female non-migrants. In the case of men, migrants are generally more positively selected for educational attainment than migrant women, especially in Africa.

37. Data on the labour force participation of migrants compared to non-migrants present a mixed picture. After controlling for age, childhood residence and current residence, the differences detected are often not significant, particularly for men. Among countries where the differences are significant, there are almost as many cases where the odds of working favour migrants as there are those where the odds favour non-migrants. An analysis of the likelihood of working in a skilled non-manual occupation shows more clear-cut differences between migrants and non-migrants. In most countries, migrant men are more likely to work in skilled occupations than non-migrants, and the same is true for women in Africa and in several countries in Asia. In Latin American countries and in the Philippines, where women have a long tradition of migrating in search of unskilled work, the odds of working in skilled occupations are lower for female migrants than for non-migrant women.

38. In Latin America, a study of 13 countries based on census data shows that, around 2000, recent migrants of both sexes were more likely to be economically active than non-migrants.[5] However, in all but two of the countries considered, unemployment was higher among migrants than among non-migrants, though in most cases the difference was less than one percentage point.

39. Using DHS data, an index of household poverty based on ownership of household appliances and type of housing was used to ascertain whether households with recent migrant women were more likely to be poor than those without such migrants. The results showed that households with migrants were only slightly more likely than those without migrants to be poor.[6] Differences were also small with regard to the access of households with and without migrants to services (water, sanitation or electricity).

[6] Mark R. Montgomery et al., *Cities Transformed* (Washington, D.C., National Academies Press, 2003).

40. In sum, internal migration is varied. Migrants are often positively selected in terms of education and skills, therefore being more likely to do well at their destination. Migrants in urban areas do not necessarily originate in rural areas and should not be equated with the urban poor. Migration is generally beneficial for migrants who gain access better opportunities, for their families who benefit from remittances and for the redistribution of labour from lower- to higher-productivity jobs in rural-urban migration or among different local labour markets when urban-urban or rural-rural migration is involved. Migration also opens up opportunities for women, giving them access to jobs outside the home and thereby contributing to their empowerment.

IV. Population distribution and population ageing

41. Migrants are more likely to move at young ages. Emigration rates from rural areas are usually highest at ages 15 to 29. In addition, fertility levels are lower in urban than in rural areas. In developing regions, total fertility in urban areas falls short of total fertility in rural areas by about a child per woman, although this difference is lower in South-East Asia.[6] In addition, the evidence available indicates that mortality in urban areas also tends to be lower than in rural areas, except possibly in countries highly affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. These differences arise because the transition to low mortality and low fertility started earlier in urban than in rural areas. Consequently, in the absence of migration, urban areas would be more advanced in the process of population ageing than rural areas and would have lower child-dependency ratios[7] and higher old-age dependency ratios[8] than rural areas. Rural-urban migration, by adding more people of working age to the urban population in relative terms, would increase the denominator of both ratios and therefore reduce them.

42. Figure VI shows that, as expected, child dependency ratios in 2005 are consistently lower for urban areas than for rural areas, although for North America the difference is very small. In Europe, the urban child dependency ratio is 15 per cent lower than the rural one. In Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, urban child dependency ratios are 30 per cent lower than those for rural areas. With respect to old-age dependency ratios, all five regions have higher values in rural than in urban areas. The largest proportional differences between the two are found in Africa, where the urban old-age dependency ratio is 30 per cent below the rural ratio, and in Europe, with a 21 per cent relative difference. In these two major areas, the population aged 60 or over is less urbanized than the total population. The same is true in Asia and North America, although the difference in urbanization levels between the older and the total populations is lower. In Latin America and the Caribbean, where the relative difference between the rural and urban old-age dependency ratios is the lowest, the older population is more urbanized than the total, mostly because older women are overrepresented in urban areas.

43. Oceania is a special case because it includes both highly urbanized Australia and New Zealand, with older populations, and the mostly rural Papua New Guinea, with a young population. Consequently, both its rural child dependency ratio and its

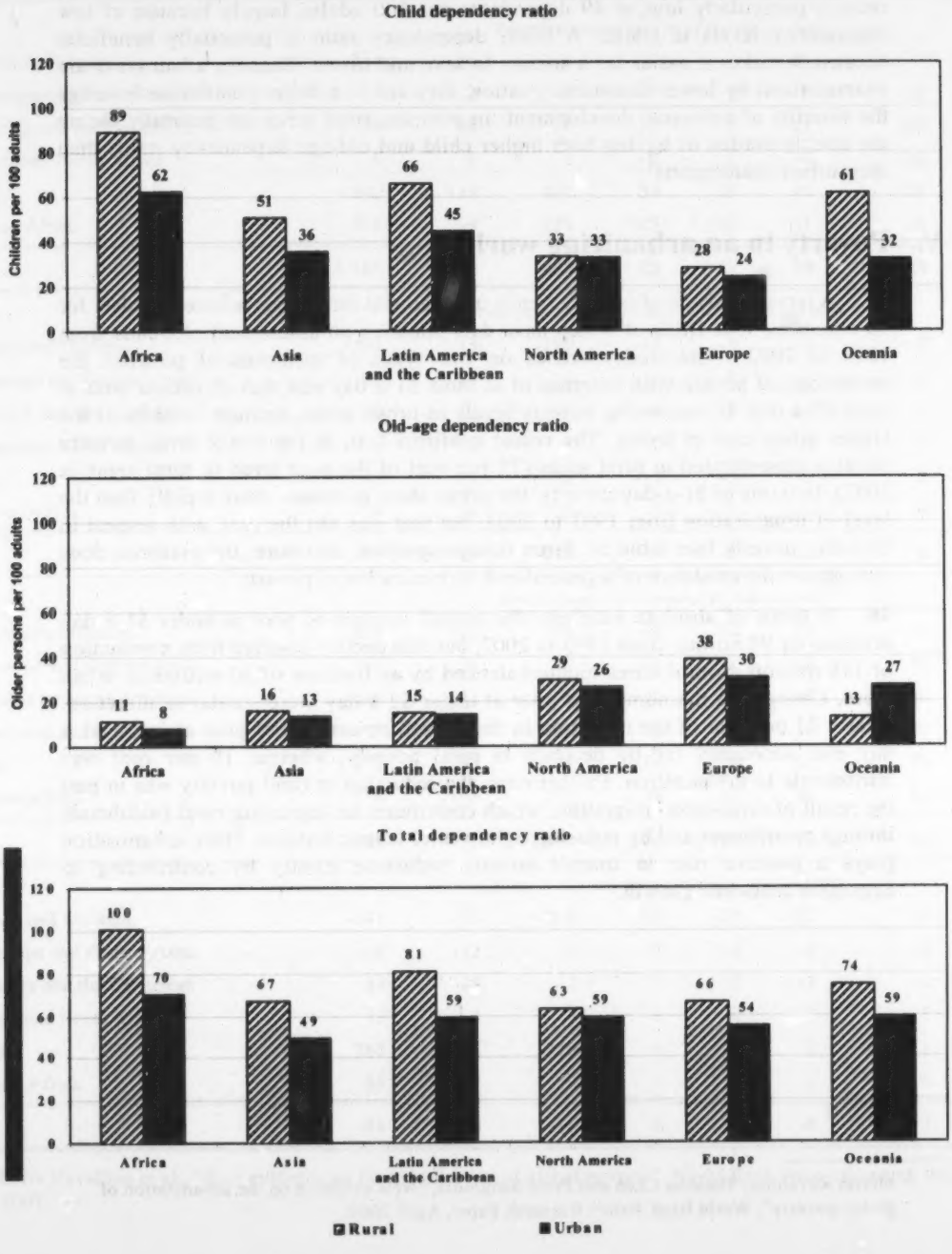
[7] The number of children (persons under age 15) per 100 adults of working age (persons aged 15 to 59).

[8] The number of persons aged 60 or over per 100 adults of working age (persons aged 15 to 59).

urban old-age dependency ratio are high, with the former having a level similar to that for Latin America and the Caribbean and the latter being similar to that of North America.

Figure VI

Dependency ratios for urban and rural areas by major area, 2005



44. In terms of total dependency ratios, the rural areas of Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean have the highest, ranging from 74 to 100 dependants per 100 adults of working age. Rural dependency ratios in Asia, Europe and North America are more moderate, ranging from 63 to 67 dependants per 100 adults. In comparison, the urban dependency ratio in Africa is high (70), while those of other major areas range mostly from 54 to 59 dependants per 100 adults. Asia's urban dependency ratio is particularly low, at 49 dependants per 100 adults, largely because of low dependency levels in China. A lower dependency ratio is potentially beneficial because it makes it easier for a society to save and invest. Because urban areas are characterized by lower dependency ratios, they are in a better position to leverage the benefits of economic development. In contrast, rural areas are generally facing the double burden of having both higher child and old-age dependency ratios than their urban counterparts.

V. Poverty in an urbanizing world

45. A recent analysis of poverty trends in urban and rural areas is based on data for 90 countries, four fifths of which have data allowing an assessment of trends from 1993 to 2002.[9] The study focuses on two types of measures of poverty: the percentage of people with incomes of at most $1 a day and that of people with at most $2 a day. In estimating poverty levels in urban areas, account is taken of the higher urban cost of living. The report confirms that, at the world level, poverty remains concentrated in rural areas (75 per cent of the poor lived in rural areas in 2002). In terms of $1-a-day poverty, the urban share increased more rapidly than the level of urbanization from 1993 to 2002, but that was not the case with respect to $2-a-day poverty (see table 5). From this perspective, therefore, the evidence does not support the existence of a generalized "urbanization of poverty".

46. In terms of absolute numbers, the overall number of poor at under $1 a day declined by 98 million from 1993 to 2002, but that decline resulted from a reduction of 148 million in rural areas counterbalanced by an increase of 50 million in urban areas. Changes in the number of poor at under $2 a day were similar in direction. Nearly 77 per cent of the reduction in the overall percentage of poor at under $1 a day was accounted for by declines in rural poverty, whereas 19 per cent was attributable to urbanization. Furthermore, the reduction in rural poverty was in part the result of rural-urban migration, which contributes to improving rural livelihoods through remittances and by inducing tighter rural labour markets. Thus, urbanization plays a positive role in overall poverty reduction mostly by contributing to aggregate economic growth.

[9] Martin Ravallion, Shaohua Chen and Prem Sangraula, "New evidence on the urbanization of global poverty", World Bank Policy Research Paper, April 2007.

Table 5
Estimates of the number of people living on at most $1 a day or at most $2 a day

Region	Number of poor (millions)			Percentage poor			Percentage urban	
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Poor	Population
	Poverty measured in terms of $1 a day in 2002							
Eastern Asia and Oceania	234	16	218	13	2	20	7	39
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	7	2	5	2	1	3	33	63
Latin America and the Caribbean	65	38	27	12	9	21	59	76
Middle East and North Africa	6	1	5	2	1	4	20	56
South Asia	542	135	407	39	35	40	25	28
Sub-Saharan Africa	328	99	229	47	40	51	30	35
Total	**1 181**	**291**	**890**	**23**	**13**	**30**	**25**	**42**
	Change in $1-a-day poverty between 1993 and 2002							
Eastern Asia and Oceania	-202	-13	-189	-13	-3	-16	0	8
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	-5	-4	-1	-1	-1	-1	-16	0
Latin America and the Caribbean	10	12	-2	0	2	-1	11	4
Middle East and North Africa	1	0	1	0	0	0	5	3
South Asia	43	21	22	-3	-3	-3	2	2
Sub-Saharan Africa	54	32	22	-2	0	-2	6	5
Total	**-98**	**50**	**-148**	**-5**	**-1**	**-7**	**6**	**4**
	Poverty measured in terms of $2 a day in 2002							
Eastern Asia and Oceania	835	126	708	46	18	63	15	39
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	64	32	32	14	11	19	50	63
Latin America and the Caribbean	169	111	58	32	28	46	66	76
Middle East and North Africa	68	20	48	24	12	38	29	56
South Asia	1 177	297	881	84	76	87	25	28
Sub-Saharan Africa	539	168	371	78	69	82	31	35
Total	**2 851**	**752**	**2 099**	**55**	**34**	**70**	**26**	**42**
	Change in $2-a-day poverty between 1993 and 2002							
Eastern Asia and Oceania	-341	-73	-268	-25	-21	-22	-2	8
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	-14	-12	-2	-3	-4	-1	-6	0
Latin America and the Caribbean	33	35	-2	2	5	-1	10	4
Middle East and North Africa	11	4	7	0	0	2	1	3
South Asia	165	56	110	-1	-3	0	1	2
Sub-Saharan Africa	96	57	39	-2	2	-3	6	5
Total	**-51**	**65**	**-116**	**-9**	**-5**	**-8**	**3**	**4**

Source: Martin Ravallion et al., "New evidence on the urbanization of global poverty", World Bank Policy Research Paper, April 2007.

47. There are, however, important regional differences. The percentage of people in poverty is highest in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. In both regions, the number of persons in poverty increased between 1993 and 2002, and in sub-Saharan Africa increases were higher in urban than in rural areas. In South Asia, the number of poor increased less in urban than in rural areas, particularly with respect to $2-a-day poverty. Eastern Asia and Oceania had the third-highest level of poverty and experienced major reductions in the number of people in poverty between 1993 and 2002, largely because the number of rural poor at under $1 a day in China dropped by 111 million. The Latin America and the Caribbean region is exceptional in that its number of rural poor decreased while that of urban poor increased. In the Middle East and North Africa, increases in the number of rural poor surpassed the changes in the number of urban poor, and in Eastern Europe and Central Asia the number of urban poor declined more than the number of rural poor.

48. Overall, the percentage of poor at under $1 a day in urban areas declined from 14 per cent in 1993 to 13 per cent in 2002, whereas that in rural areas declined from 37 per cent to 30 per cent. The marked decline in the percentage of poor in rural areas was driven mainly by reductions in poverty in the rural areas of Eastern Asia and Oceania. In all other regions, the reductions in poverty levels were well below the overall weighted mean. In general, reductions in the percentage of poor in urban areas were lower than for rural areas, and Latin America and the Caribbean recorded an outright increase. That region is the only one where over half of the poor live in urban areas, yet they are still less urbanized than the total population. Although in most regions there has been an increasing concentration of the poor in urban areas, simulations indicate that, with current trends, it would take many decades for the majority of the poor to live in urban areas.

49. In general, the prevalence of poverty tends to be lower at higher levels of urbanization and the difference between urban and rural poverty tends to decline with rising urbanization. These observations and the estimates presented above suggest that urbanization has played a quantitatively important role in reducing overall poverty by providing opportunities to rural-urban migrants, some of whom escape poverty by moving to cities, and by improving indirectly the standard of living of those remaining in rural areas. As Ravallion and others note, "The poor are gravitating to towns and cities, but more rapid poverty reduction through economic growth will probably entail an even faster pace of urbanization".[9]

VI. Urbanization and access to basic services

50. In 2004, 83 per cent of the world population had access to an improved or protected source of drinking water. In developed countries, all urban dwellers and 94 per cent of rural inhabitants had such access. In developing countries, 92 per cent of urban dwellers and 70 per cent of the rural population had access.[10] Access to an improved or protected source of drinking water was poorest in sub-Saharan Africa and in the developing countries of Oceania, where 80 per cent of the urban population but only about 40 per cent of the rural population had access. In developing countries, access increased by 9 percentage points between 1990 and 2004 owing to improved access in rural areas. Globally, the millennium

[10] World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund, *Meeting the MDG Drinking Water and Sanitation Target: The Urban and Rural Challenge of the Decade*.

development target of halving the proportion of people lacking access to safe drinking water by 2015 is likely to be met. However, extrapolating past trends, over 900 million people are expected still to lack access in 2015, 75 per cent of whom will live in rural areas.

51. Two billion of the 2.4 billion people lacking access to basic sanitation in 2004 lived in rural areas, when just 59 per cent of the world population had access to an improved sanitation facility.[10] In developed countries, 98 per cent of urban dwellers and 93 per cent of rural inhabitants had such access. In developing countries, 73 per cent of urban dwellers but only 33 per cent of rural dwellers had access to improved sanitation. Rural inhabitants in East Asia, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa were the most underserved, with at most 28 per cent having access. The urban populations of those regions were also relatively underserved, with just 53 per cent of urban dwellers in sub-Saharan Africa having access to improved sanitation, and 63 per cent and 69 per cent, respectively, of those in South Asia and Ea t Asia. Overall, access to sanitation in developing countries increased from 35 per cent in 1990 to 50 per cent in 2004, with a near doubling of the proportion of rural dwellers having access. However, progress was minimal in sub-Saharan Africa, whether in urban or rural areas, and rural access declined in the Commonwealth of Independent States and the developing countries of Oceania. Given these trends, the world is unlikely to reach the millennium development target of halving the proportion of people lacking access to improved sanitation between 1990 and 2015. The number of persons lacking access is projected to fall in rural areas while it rises in urban areas, yet the number of rural residents lacking access to improved sanitation in 2015 is expected to be twice that in urban areas.[10]

52. In 2005, nearly a quarter of the world's people lacked access to electricity, 80 per cent of whom lived in rural areas. Whereas access in developed countries is virtually universal, in developing countries 15 per cent of urban dwellers and 44 per cent of rural inhabitants live without electricity. Sub-Saharan Africa has by far the highest proportions without access in both rural (92 per cent) and urban areas (42 per cent). Access is also relatively poor in South Asia, where 55 per cent of rural residents and 30 per cent of urban residents live without electricity. Those two regions account for 80 per cent of people lacking access to electricity today.

53. Using DHS data, an analysis of access to services by place of residence corroborates that there are major gaps in developing countries between urban and rural areas in the provision of services.[6] Furthermore, smaller cities, particularly those with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, are less well served than larger ones, and the urban poor have significantly less access to basic services than other urban residents.

54. In urban areas, lack of access to services is often associated with the poor housing conditions typical of slums. UN-Habitat characterizes slum households as urban households lacking one or more of the following: durable housing, sufficient living area, access to an improved water source, access to improved sanitation or secure tenure. In 2005, 37 per cent of the urban population of developing countries lived in slums, representing some 840 million people.[11] Asia had the highest number of slum-dwellers (542 million), 201 million of whom lived in China and another

[11] *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2007* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.I.15).

113 million in India. Africa had 179 million and Latin America and the Caribbean 117 million. About half of the slum households in sub-Saharan Africa suffer from two or more of the types of deprivation identified above, and in both South Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean about 35 per cent do so. In most regions, the lack of adequate sanitation and excessive crowding are the most common types of deficiency.[12]

55. Access to educational services also varies by type of residence. Average levels of educational attainment are higher in urban than in rural areas. They are also higher in larger cities, particularly those with more than a million inhabitants, than in smaller cities, but there is substantial diversity among cities of all sizes.[6] Levels of school enrolment are higher in urban than in rural areas, and they are somewhat higher in larger than in smaller cities. Poor children in urban areas are less likely to be enrolled in school than other urban children.

VII. Urbanization and demographic behaviour

56. In the major areas of the developing world, the difference between rural and urban fertility has remained roughly constant since 1970. In most countries, the rural population has the highest fertility, the lowest level of contraceptive use and the highest level of unmet need for family planning. Rural births are the least likely to be attended by trained medical personnel. Rural women are also usually the most likely to depend on government-supported family planning services for contraception and are least likely to know that the risk of contracting HIV can be reduced by using condoms and by limiting the number of sexual partners. In addition, in many countries there are large gaps in demographic behaviour and outcomes between the urban poor and other urban residents. More often than not, the urban poor exhibit levels of fertility, use of modern contraceptives and unmet need closer to those of the rural population than to those of the other urban population.[13]

57. Total fertility tends to be higher and use of modern contraceptives lower in smaller cities (those with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants). The major exception is South-East Asia, where the differences in fertility and contraceptive use between the rural population, that in small cities and that in larger urban centres are small, mainly because of the emphasis Governments have placed on providing family planning services in rural areas.[6]

58. Despite the differences noted, the urban advantage in terms of reproductive health and access to family planning is smaller than expected. Although urban women have lower levels of unmet need for family planning than rural women, the incidence of mistimed or unwanted births does not appear to be lower in cities. Furthermore, the urban poor are little better off than rural residents in several aspects of reproductive health and access to services. They often lack the information necessary to make good decisions about reproductive health. People living in smaller cities are also disadvantaged in terms of access to reproductive health services.

---

[12] UN-Habitat, *State of the World's Cities 2006/7* (London, Earthscan, 2006).

[13] United Nations Population Fund, *State of the World Population 2007: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth.*

59. With regard to health and mortality, the evidence available indicates that life expectancy is generally greater in urban than in rural areas, although most developing countries lack separate urban and rural estimates of lifetime mortality risks. Survey information on the health status of residents of selected cities in developing countries indicates that the epidemiological transition, which entails a shift in the primary causes of morbidity and mortality from communicable diseases to chronic and degenerative diseases, is more advanced in the cities than in the rural areas of the developing world. This trend parallels that experienced historically by developed countries where the epidemiological transition started in cities but is today advanced in both urban and rural areas. However, in many cities in Africa, the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic has stalled the epidemiological transition and the reduction of mortality.

60. The prevalence of chronic disease (including cardiovascular disease, cancers and diabetes) and accidents is increasing in many cities of the developing world. Traffic accidents, in particular, are a significant cause of injury or death with higher incidence in urban areas. Growing consumption of sweeteners and fats in the more urbanized developing countries is producing higher levels of obesity, associated in turn with higher incidence of diabetes or cardiovascular disease. In contrast, in the least urbanized countries, high rates of infectious disease and maternal mortality remain common in rural areas.

61. According to an assessment of urban-rural differentials in childhood mortality based on DHS data, infant and child mortality are on average higher in rural than in urban areas.[6] Better urban public infrastructure, higher levels of maternal education and better access to health care in cities are largely responsible for those differences. The evidence does not show a systematic erosion over time of such urban advantage, except in sub-Saharan Africa, where high HIV/AIDS prevalence in cities seems to have stalled or reversed the decline in urban child mortality. In six countries in Africa, child mortality increased in both urban and rural areas.

62. The urban advantage in terms of child survival is buttressed by other findings. If health is assessed in terms of height for age, children in urban areas are significantly healthier than those in rural areas. Moreover, in Latin America, children living in larger cities are better off in terms of height by age than those residing in smaller urban centres.

63. Although urban children overall may be healthier on average than rural children, those in poor urban families are generally worse off than other urban children and, in some cases, may fare worse than rural children. In nearly all countries, poor urban children are shorter and weigh less for their age than other urban children. Considering weight for height, poor urban children are generally heavier than rural children, but in 16 countries the reverse obtains. In general, poor urban children face greater mortality risks than other urban children, although those risks are usually not as high as those faced by rural children.

64. Studies comparing the health status of rural children with that of children living in urban slums arrive at conclusions similar to those comparing rural children with the urban poor.[12] Rural children, for instance, are less likely than children living in urban slums to have received measles vaccinations. Both groups experience episodes of diarrhoea or acute respiratory infections with similar frequency, and in most of the countries considered (31 out of 44) the proportion of underweight children in slums is within 2 percentage points of the proportion in

rural areas. In another 12 countries, rural children are more likely to be underweight than children living in urban slums. Indicators of the use of medical services, such as care-seeking for ill children or assistance by qualified attendants when women give birth, tend to show substantially lower levels of access for rural residents than for people living in urban slums.

VIII. Population distribution policies

65. In 2007, 85 per cent of Governments expressed concern about their pattern of population distribution, a percentage comparable to that recorded in the 1970s. Among developing countries, 56 per cent wished to make a major change in the spatial distribution of their populations, whereas 32 per cent desired a minor change. Among developed countries, 37 per cent desired a major change and 39 per cent a minor change. Dissatisfaction regarding patterns of population distribution was highest in Africa (74 per cent of its countries desired a major change) and Asia (51 per cent desired a major change). In Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania and Europe, about 40 per cent of Governments considered that major changes in spatial distribution were desirable (see figure VII).

Figure VII
Government views on the spatial distribution of their populations, 2007

66. Reducing or even reversing the flow of rural-urban migrants has been the most common policy pursued by Governments wishing to change the spatial distribution of the population. Strategies used to retain the population in rural areas include establishing internal migration controls, undertaking land redistribution, creating regional development zones and, more recently, promoting economic diversification and competitiveness in rural areas through the mobilization of investment and the improvement of rural livelihoods. As a result of such recent policies, jobs in rural areas in a third of OECD countries have increased markedly.[14] By 2007, 70 per cent

[14] *The New Rural Paradigm: Policies and Governance* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2006).

of all countries had implemented policies to reduce rural-urban migration. Among developing countries, 73 per cent had done so, compared to 62 per cent of developed countries. In Africa, 83 per cent of countries had policies to reduce rural-urban migration, whereas 73 per cent of those in Asia and Oceania had such policies.

67. The second most common policy is aimed at reducing migrant flows to large cities. The percentage of developing countries with such policies rose from 44 per cent to 74 per cent in between 1976 and 2007. Among developed countries, the proportion of those with policies to reduce flows to large cities declined from 55 per cent in 1975 to 26 per cent in 1996 and then rebounded to reach 39 per cent in 2007. In Oceania, 83 per cent of countries have such policies, in Africa 78 per cent, in Asia 71 per cent and in Latin America and the Caribbean 68 per cent.

68. Other types of policies used to shape the spatial distribution of the population have had fewer adherents. Fewer than 4 in 10 Governments have policies to promote urban-rural migration to relieve population pressure on city infrastructure and reduce urban unemployment. These measures have been more common among developing countries (44 per cent have used them) than among developed countries (19 per cent have used them). In Africa and Asia, 55 per cent and 64 per cent of countries, respectively, have pursued such policies.

69. Fourteen per cent of countries have policies encouraging urban-urban migration, mostly from large to smaller cities. Such policies reflect the view that, beyond a certain size, cities become less efficient and productive.[1] These policies are common in countries where one city accounts for a large proportion of the urban population. About a fifth of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and of those in Oceania have such policies, as do 17 per cent of those in Africa and 16 per cent of those in Asia. The establishment of new cities and the relocation of capitals are strategies to foster urban relocation.

70. Some developed countries have adopted measures to reduce migration from cities to rural areas in order to control urban sprawl and its environmental consequences. Concerns about pollution, traffic congestion and commuting times have prompted Governments to limit the encroachment of urban settlements into surrounding rural areas. Fifteen per cent of the countries in Europe and 4 per cent of those in Asia have implemented such policies.

71. Governments have also undertaken initiatives to improve the quality of life in and the sustainability of cities. These policies include regulations regarding urban growth, zoning, land subdivision and building codes or standards. They may also focus on public land acquisition and allocation, investment in public infrastructure and facilities, and fostering public-private partnerships in urban development projects. In New York City, for instance, a new strategy proposes building housing for an additional million people, increasing access to parklands, updating the ageing water network, modernizing power plants and reducing water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. The plan also includes congestion pricing to reduce traffic in the central business district. Congestion pricing has been successful in reducing traffic in Bergen, London, Malta, Oslo, Singapore, Stockholm and Trondheim.

72. In developing countries, many Governments have taken measures to improve the quality of life in poor urban areas. In India, the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission began in 2005 to provide funding for projects to improve

infrastructure and increase access to basic services for the urban poor in Indian cities. The Government of Burkina Faso has been working to provide access to water and sanitation for all the inhabitants of Ouagadougou, a third of whom live in slums. For the urban poor, access to secure land tenure is particularly relevant. Projects to provide titles and security of tenure for people living in slums are being undertaken in many countries.

73. Overall, the spatial distribution of the population is linked to the territorial distribution of economic and social opportunities. Urbanization is shaped by the clustering of productive activity, where firms benefit from proximity to other firms, whether in the same industry or in complementary sectors. Beneficial urbanization depends on the availability and quality of public services, including access to electricity, water, education and health services, transportation and communication. Higher national road densities and greater government expenditures on transport contribute to spatial deconcentration of productive activities and population.

74. In many countries, decentralization has given local governments more functions and new powers to raise revenue. Common to most of these reforms are greater openness and accountability, increased involvement of civil society, greater participation of women in local decision-making and the devolution of legal and fiscal responsibilities to local governments in charge of urban affairs. The governance of large urban agglomerations faces the additional challenge of coordinating multiple jurisdictions and promoting coherent administrative and policy solutions for the benefit of all the inhabitants of large metropolitan areas.

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

75. In 2008, the number of urban dwellers (3.4 billion) will equal, for the first time in history, the number of rural dwellers. According to current projections, the world can expect the urban population to increase by 3.1 billion persons by 2050, whereas the rural population will peak at 3.5 billion around 2019 and decline thereafter. Virtually the full increase in the urban population is expected to occur in developing countries. Natural increase continues to make sizeable contributions to urban population growth, often accounting for 60 per cent or more of that growth. Internal migration permits a reallocation of the labour force to more productive activities and opens up opportunities for migrants that are not available at their place of origin. Urbanization is a process that is intrinsically related to development, and it must be managed in ways that maximize its potential benefits and prevent its negative consequences.

76. The improvement of service delivery to the urban poor and to the inhabitants of small cities and rural areas needs to be given priority. Services that are most conducive to improving the well-being of the populations involved include those related to health delivery, including reproductive health, schooling and access to improved sanitation and to improved and secure sources of drinking water.

77. In deciding the location of public health facilities, authorities should consider their accessibility to poor urban dwellers. The location of such facilities in small towns linked to surrounding rural areas can also improve the access of rural dwellers to health services.

78. **To reduce the potential population growth in urban and rural areas alike, priority should be given to meeting the needs of poor urban dwellers and rural inhabitants for family planning. Without sustained reductions in fertility in both urban and rural areas, the urban population in developing countries will grow faster than projected.**

79. **Because HIV prevalence is generally higher in urban than in rural areas, priority should be given to the provision of adequate information on the prevention of HIV infection and treatment services to urban dwellers and to temporary rural-urban migrants.**

80. **In addressing the needs of the older population, Governments need to take into account that, in many contexts, a higher proportion of the older population lives in rural than in urban areas.**

81. **There continues to be a need for poverty reduction strategies to focus on the rural poor in developing countries. Ensuring secure land tenure, improving access to water resources, encouraging investment to enhance agricultural productivity, developing rural infrastructure and facilitating access to credit are measures to consider for the improvement of rural livelihoods. Integrated development strategies that capitalize on the interactions between small cities and neighbouring rural localities can provide a framework for the generation of off-farm employment for rural residents.**

82. **A fundamental task of urban governance is the management of diversity and inequality. To assess the relevance of these factors in settlements of different types and sizes, spatially disaggregated data are indispensable. The development of local databases that reflect local realities and inform policy, planning and investment decisions at the local level is urgently needed.**

83. **In order to accommodate future urban growth, local authorities need to plan ahead, especially by providing the urban poor with serviced land to build and improve their own housing. In doing so, measures to secure property rights are indispensable. Such measures should ensure that women's property rights are equal to those of men. By regulating and orienting urban expansion, local authorities can minimize the urban footprint and be proactive in preventing environmental degradation and reducing the environmental vulnerability of the poor.**

84. **To increase the effectiveness of policies aimed at improving the lives of urban dwellers, particularly the poor or those living in slums, local authorities should encourage and support the active involvement of civil society organizations representing the relevant groups. Local organizations of the urban poor and non-governmental organizations have proved that their collective efforts can improve housing, infrastructure and services, greatly alleviating and reducing urban poverty.**

85. **The higher payoff for schooling in urban than in rural areas is a key factor in inducing the migration of the better educated. In countries where economic growth has been moderate or strong, urban returns to schooling have been maintained, profoundly influencing decisions about investing in children's schooling and family size. In most settings, rural-urban migrants are able to attain earnings comparable to those of native urbanites after an adjustment period. The accumulation of physical capital, technological change and**

investment in urban areas contributes to this outcome. Authorities should focus on propitiating such changes to promote economic growth and do less to prevent rural-urban migration per se.

86. As the world becomes increasingly urban, decisions taken today in cities across the world will shape the economic, social and environmental future of humankind. Properly managed, urbanization can help in combating poverty, inequality and environmental degradation, but action to capitalize on the opportunities it presents and to address the challenges it raises must be prompt and sustained.